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MEXICO¹

BY AUSTEN G. FOX,
New York.

Its problem. Out of what does it arise? Does it arise out of an absence of a constitution? No, because Mexico has a written constitution, which, upon its face, is fair enough to look upon. Must not the problem arise, therefore, out of the characteristics of the people that make the constitution ineffectual for order?

How does it happen, then, that Mexico's problem has become the problem of the United States? Mexico threatens no invasion of the United States. The concrete problem for the United States must be shall we invade Mexico? We are not asked by Mexicans to invade their territory. If we go, we must go with arms in our hands, and we must intend to use our arms. In short, we must go with the purpose of killing, or maiming those who choose to defend their country against our invasion. Call this intervention, or any other name that we prefer. In fact, it is war, with all that is implied in the term, in a country, larger than France and inhabited by fifteen or twenty millions of people.

When we decree intervention, we declare war, and that means victory, or defeat to our arms. Let us discard the possibility of defeat, and assume victory. It must be a complete victory, however, and how long must we wage war before our rule shall be complete? Who can tell, how many of our best must fall in order to establish our rule? The waste and cost in material, who can estimate? Who knows, today, the cost of subjugating the Filipinos?

When we shall have put Mexico under our feet, what then—what next? Are we to retire, or are we to stay? It must be one or the other.

If we retire, what shall we have accomplished? Will bayonet thrusts in our victims have implanted in the breasts of the survivors that national character and capacity for orderly government, the absence of which is at the bottom of the present disorder in Mexico?

¹ Remarks as presiding officer of the session of the Academy, Saturday morning, April 4, 1914.

War, whether we call it a war of reprisal or primitive expedition, or any other name, is seldom of educational value in fitting the losers for self governemnt. If, therefore, we retire at the close of hostilities, to what result can we point, except that of slaughter and increased taxes?

There is but one alternative, and that is permanent occupation of Mexico by our troops and its government from Washington. It will be easy enough for us to go in, but it may, at least, be impossible to get out, except accompanied by the confession that the so-called Mexican problem remains unchanged. In short, how can we expect successful warlike operations in Mexico to raise the political character of its people? Neither political nor social uplift, as it is fashionable now to call it, is one of the results of the destruction and desolation of war.

We must, therefore, ask ourselves this question: Are we so free of problems of our own that we are ready to take up the burden of establishing through war a stable government in Mexico, and of maintaining it for a period which none can measure, at a cost which no one can approximate?

This is no time for disturbing the peace we now enjoy.

We are told that there are twenty thousand Americans in Mexico and we know that the Southern Pacific Railway Company, the Standard Oil Company and other corporations, as well as individuals, have large investments south of our border. When we find pressure brought to bear upon Congress, or upon our President to begin a war with Mexico, may we not inquire whence the pressure proceeds? Who will be the beneficiaries, if Congress, or the President yields to the pressure? Among the men who will be called upon to lay down their lives in the event of armed intervention, will there be found any one who now clamors for the protection of so-called American interests?

What evidence have we that the American people insist upon a departure from the policy of letting other peoples work out, in their own way, their own political problems? Some there are who say that the President ought not to have done this, or that, or ought not to have done one thing, or another.

Two things, however, he has done, is doing, and may be trusted to continue to do.

He has stood, is standing and we know he will continue to stand for the keeping of public faith pledged by solemn treaty, unshaken by appeals to escape from the common sense meaning of the plain English of our contracts.

We know that we may look to him, with unwavering faith, as one who will act as the trustee for the peace and welfare of the whole people of the United States ready to undergo obloquy if need be, in his unalterable determination that no act of his shall deprive our nation of its right to continue to work out its own great problems and to perform its obligations in peace with the world and particularly with its neighbors, north and south.

Non ponebat enim rumores ante salutem;
Ergo magis magisque, viri nunc gloria crescit.